

ASTHMA AWARENESS MONTH

HON. CARRIE P. MEEK

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 26, 1999

Mrs. MEEK of Florida. Mr. Speaker, this is Asthma Awareness Month. I rise to commend my colleagues, the gentlelady from California, Congresswoman JUANITA MILLENDER-MCDONALD, and the gentlelady from Maryland, Congresswoman CONSTANCE A. MORELLA, for introducing the Asthma Awareness, Education And Treatment Act, and for their leadership in protesting America's children, minorities, women and the poor from the devastating effects of asthma.

Asthma is a chronic respiratory disease characterized by inflammation of the airways, and increased responsiveness to various stimuli commonly called asthma triggers. Asthma episodes involve progressively worsening shortness of breath, cough, wheezing, or chest tightness, or some combination of these systems. The severity of asthma may range from mild to life-threatening.

An estimated 14.6 million persons in the United States have asthma. The Centers For Disease Control and Prevention reported a 61 percent increase in the asthma rate between 1982 and 1994. According to The American Lung Association, more than 5,600 people die of asthma in the United States annually. This represents a 45.3 percent increase in mortality between 1985 and 1995.

The death rate from asthma for African Americans is almost three times that of whites. Among chronic illnesses in children, asthma is the most common. Approximately 33 percent of asthma patients are under the age of 18.

In the United States, asthma is the number one cause of school absences attributed to chronic conditions, leading to an average 7.3 school days missed annually. One study estimated that in 1994, school days lost to asthma amounted to \$673.2 million in caretaker's time lost from work, including outside employment and housekeeping.

Low income families are struck the hardest by asthma. Seventy nine of every 1,000 people under 45 years old earning less than \$10,000 per year have asthma. Fifty three of every 1,000 people earning less than \$35,000 per year have asthma.

The American Lung Association has been fighting lung disease for more than 90 years. With the generous support of the public and the help of volunteers, they have seen many advances against lung disease. However, the fight against asthma is far from won and government must do more if we are to conquer this dread disease.

We must work with community-based organizations to educate one another on this serious illness and how it can be managed through medication, clean environments, and regular physical activity. We must provide screening for asthma in non-traditional medical settings; we must establish a nationwide media campaign to educate the public about the symptoms of, and the treatment for asthma.

Most importantly, we must create clean environments. To do so, we must take appro-

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priate measures to eliminate dustmites, animal dander, cockroaches, and mold and poor ventilation in schools, day care centers and homes. I am proud to be an original cosponsor of the Asthma Awareness, Education And Treatment Act.

As we look forward to the millennium, working together with the American Lung Association and other community-based organizations all over America, we can ease the burdens of asthma and make breathing easier for everyone.

IN HONOR OF NATIONAL FOSTER PARENT AWARENESS MONTH

HON. JULIA CARSON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 26, 1999

Ms. CARSON. Mr. Speaker, this month marks the 11th observance of the National Foster Parent Awareness Month. Originally conceived at the 1987 National Foster Parent Training Conference, National Foster Parent Awareness Month is the impetus for communities around the nation to host activities and events to honor foster parents for making a difference in the lives of children in foster care.

In my home state of Indiana, nearly 15,000 children are in the foster care system. Nationwide, the number is an alarming one half million children. These children often have special needs. They are victims of physical abuse, sexual abuse or neglect. They may suffer emotional, behavioral or developmental problems that range from moderate to severe. Most children reside only temporarily with foster parents, until it is considered safe for them to return home. A child's stay with foster parents can be as short as one night or as long as several years or more.

This month we honor the individuals and families who open their hearts and homes to the children in need of a safe and nurturing living environment—Foster Parents. Foster parents can be single, married or divorced. They own homes or live in apartments. Some are as young as 21 years old while others are retired. What they have in common is that they have demonstrated attentiveness, tenacity, patience and empathy along with a willingness to grow and learn from the experience of fostering and an equal capacity to love and let go. Foster parents provide a vital service to our nation's displaced children. They are a valuable resource for families and children. Their work is extremely difficult, knowing that they are working to help reunite a child with a biological parent, or care for a child until that child is adopted.

Mr. Speaker, while I rise today to praise and applaud foster parents for the very important work they do, I want to acknowledge an amazing organization and an outstanding individual, from my District, supporting the foster care system. Because foster parents take on the awesome responsibility of providing both emotional and financial support for the neediest children at a great personal expense, it is very important that we encourage our communities to support foster parents as they support foster kids.

It is with great pride that I commend FosterCare Luggage, an Indianapolis based non-profit organization, for its invaluable contribution to the well-being of foster kids. When Marc Brown, founder of FosterCare Luggage, considered taking in a foster child in 1995, he learned that foster children often had to move from family to family with their belongings stuffed into black plastic trash bags. Brown decided to make it his personal mission to get proper luggage for foster children. FosterCare Luggage works collaboratively with other agencies and organizations in Indiana to assure that all children in out-of-home care receive luggage according to their age-appropriate need and seeks funding to provide other items, such as clothing and hygiene products. With help from private donors and volunteers, FosterCare Luggage has provided suitcases to thousands of children.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I wish to recognize a young lady who has demonstrated that one person can make a significant difference. Nicole Slibeck, a Senior at Zionsville High School in Indianapolis, collected 90 pieces of luggage for FosterCare Luggage's program. With so much attention recently devoted to what is going wrong with teenagers across the country, I am pleased to put forth Nicole's achievement as an example of what teenagers around the country are doing in support of our communities.

EXPOSING RACISM

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 26, 1999

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, in my continuing efforts to document and expose racism in America, I submit the following articles into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD.

HOMOSEXUALS, DISABLED, ELDERLY ADDED TO HATE CRIMES LAW

(By Dennis Patterson)

RALEIGH.—People who hate homosexuals, the disabled or the elderly and target them for crimes could face increased sentences under a bill approved by a House committee.

The measure, which now goes to the full House, expands North Carolina's hate crimes law to include sexual orientation, disabilities, gender and age. Crimes that are proven to be motivated by hate would be increased to at least a felony.

The hate crimes law now applies to race, religion and national origin.

"This bill doesn't protect anybody," Rep. Martin Nesbitt, D-Buncombe, said Tuesday as the House Judiciary I Committee debated the bill. "It punishes people for perpetrating a crime because they hate a class of people."

The bill "centers on the question of whether we will be civil in North Carolina," said Rep. Paul Luebke, D-Durham, one of the bill's two primary sponsors. "It is, to put it in a phrase, a statement that we will not hate."

The bill is named after Matthew Shepard, a homosexual with North Carolina connections who was beaten to death in Wyoming.

John Rustin of the North Carolina Family Policy Council called Shepard's death a "brutal and inexcusable crime." But the homosexual acts that would be covered by the